

Quarter-Life Crisis
Francine Krause

Which way is home?

The thought always looms in the back of my head,
Wriggling between bone and tissue
Like an unhatched fledgling still bound by the egg
Pecking,
 Pecking,
 Pecking away.

All I want to do is write,
 Write this poem,
 Scream to the whole world
What I see,
 What I feel
 Without opening my throat.

I want to sit on the prickly grass and talk with the trees.
They do talk back.
They rustle imagery in their leaves and carve metaphors in their bark
While their little sisters breathe the scent of rhymes,
The sky wears the color of tone,
And the wind clacks a meter with her tongue.

Though I cannot pluck money out of the earth
Like my father plucks his onions.

Are my dreams such a heavy load?

If I could,
I would rip the world out from underneath my feet,
Pinch it,
 Pull it,
 Press it between my fingers,
 Throw away some pieces,
Add new ones,
 Roll it back into a ball,
And toss it to the stars.
Reshape this misshapen world
That thinks too much
And so clutters my mind,
The poet's.

How can I do what I want when the world drags me another way?

Seven swords pin me down,
The taste of iron in my mouth.

My soul
That shining curled up creature living under my skin,

Made from light,
 Born into dark.
She wants to feel free again.

Yet what does it mean to be free?

They say:
Follow your heart.
But that rampant ragged thing in my chest doesn't even know where to start.

Perhaps I should channel my childhood.
I'll regress!
I will be a zoo keeper,
A cashier,
No, a princess!
Unless,

I go even further to when I'd just learned to talk,
When all I wanted to be—
I confess—
Was a tiny ball so I could bounce instead of walk.
Though dwelling behind glass,
A prisoner of a machine,
For my whole rounded rubber life seems less and less serene.
And yet,
Only twenty-five cents for freedom.

I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker
Across the soot-black sky,
Leaving a hurried trail of lingering yellow dust.
Leaping into the night
I reach for the fleeting light,
But the gold melts on my fingertips
Before vanishing behind the moon.

How do I follow a disappearing path?

Maybe I should rub my shoulders on the edges of this moment,
Curl my spine around these words,

Flick my tail against my thoughts,
And bury my muzzle into tomorrow.
Maybe then
I would know my way home.